

Parshas Kedoshim

Parshas Kedoshim is a *parsha* which contains many fundamental laws of Judaism. The famous command of "ואהבת לרעך כמוך" - Love your fellow man as yourself" is found in this *parsha* as a part of the *mitzvos* which govern social interaction amongst men. This *mitzvah* was taught by *Hillel* as the main point of the *Torah*, with all else being commentary (*Shabbos* 31a). However, it is difficult to comprehend how we can be expected to have the same love for a fellow man as we have for our own being.

Rav Shamshon R. Hirsch notes that the *Torah* says "לרעך" which means *that of your friend*. He interprets this to mean that we be concerned about our fellow man's interest as much as we are concerned about our own. We much seek the well-being, success and happiness of others as much as we pursue it for ourselves. This is less daunting; yet, it is still quite a challenge.

The secret is to recognize that our fellow man is a member of *Hashem's* G-dly family. He doesn't stand as a competitor who is taking our share of happiness from this world at our expense. If we include our social interactions in our service of *Hashem*, we immediately are able to ignore our selfish emotions, and we are able to focus on seeking goodness for all.

In the weeks cumulating in the celebration of *Shavuos* we prepare for the giving of the *Torah*. This time calls to us to grow in the areas that are especially conducive to the acquisition of *Torah*. In *Avos* (6:6) the *Mishna* enumerates 48 means to acquire *Torah* and 11 of them are social attributes which govern interaction with others. This is because *Torah* is meant to guide human relations and is to be practiced communally. If one doesn't have the correct social attitudes, one won't be successful in observing the *mitzvos* no matter what realm they are in.

Our family life and home are the incubator for these skills and attitudes. Teaching children proper interpersonal behaviors and skills will set them up for success not just as people but as successful *Torah* observant Jews as well.